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ABSTRACT

This guide is intended to help employees in the hotel and catering industry to cut costs without cutting corners by showing more concern to cost containment measures and increasing personal productivity. The first three sections discuss the importance of the individual employee's behavior to overall cost containment in the workplace, and different types of corner cutting and their ultimate costs. The major portion of the booklet presents examples of ways to cut running costs without resorting to risky corner cutting or generating costs that are painful in human terms. The tips provided address cost cutting in the kitchen, office, storage areas, restaurant and bar, reception and foyer, and guest rooms and public areas. Tips are given for conserving energy; controlling quality, portion size, and food waste in the kitchen; using the correct utensils, equipment, and materials for the job; serving foods and beverages properly and cost-effectively; containing expenses involved in office work; curtailing customer and employee theft and dishonesty; and storing things properly. Concluding the guide are a summary and checklist. (MN)

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HOTEL & CATERING TRAINING · BOARD ·

Cut costs! Not corners!

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The Helping Hand
Series
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Dear Colleague

This book is for you.

It's to help you enjoy your job and make an even greater success of it.

The book looks at ways we can all become more efficient – without sacrificing comfort or safety. Please read it carefully. Think about its suggestions and try to follow them in your work.

You'll see how valuable your efforts are – for your own job satisfaction, for customer happiness and the success of your workplace.

Obviously a book cannot deal with everything that happens in real life. So, if you have any queries or suggestions about the way we do things, have a chat with your supervisor (your immediate boss).

Your management tries to do its part. Please try to do yours. We all depend upon you!

Thank you.

The Manager

COSTS . . . AND YOU

What have costs to do with you?

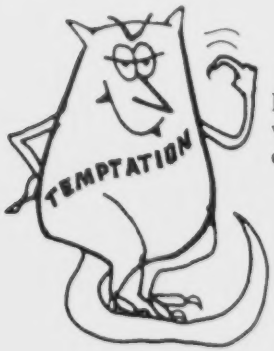
The answer is: quite a lot!

It might not always be obvious but in fact you and your colleagues have an important part to play in the costs of your workplace.

You have probably heard the term "running costs". It covers all the things that your employer has to spend money on just to run the operation each day. This includes buying in food, drink and cleaning materials; settling the heating and lighting bills and paying staff wages.

The level of running costs is influenced in two main ways. The first is the price your employer has to pay for supplies and other essentials.

The second influence is less expected – but this is where you and your colleagues come in. Costs are affected by things like the number of crockery breakages, the care of equipment and the waste of food, cleaning materials, etc.



How exactly you play a part in the costs of your workplace depends on what your job is and how you do it. Your efficiency and skill counts.

Consider these examples of some of the less expected ways that staff influence costs. How many of these, or similar, things have you done?

YES	NO	
☐	☐	Used the telephone at work for a private call – so that you increase the bill and block genuine business calls.
☐	☐	Left equipment (such as grills or televisions) switched on when they were not in use – so that unnecessary energy is consumed.
☐	☐	Taken away "old" or "unwanted" items without permission – so that someone had to sort out incorrect stock records.
☐	☐	"Borrowed" something from work for home use – so that it had to be replaced at work.
☐	☐	Failed to report a tiny tear in a table cloth – so that it was badly torn at the laundry.

Can you see some of the ways you may affect the running costs of your company or organization?

Have you ever stopped to wonder why your employer is so keen to keep costs down? Just consider: the level of running costs may influence the survival of your organization!

YOU . . . AND CORNER CUTTING

You can see why this book asks you to cut costs – how you and your colleagues play a crucial part in the costs of your workplace.

But what about cutting corners? What has this to do with you? It could be quite a lot! You'll soon see why.

Obviously, you always do your best to do a good job. You play your part in your work team.

But occasionally members of the team cut corners in their work. It might be accidentally – through carelessness or through rushing. Or it might be through temptation to be a little lazy, to reduce effort, or even to be dishonest.

Consider these examples of cutting corners. How many of these, or similar, things have you done?

YES	NO	
☐	☐	Saved time by missing out the hot rinse for saucepans.
☐	☐	Delayed doing a "boring" job, even though it was important.
☐	☐	Skipped the procedure for removing goods from the store.
☐	☐	Failed to report a frayed electricity cable.
☐	☐	Hidden a broken lamp to avoid owning up to having damaged it.
☐	☐	Did not bother to portion food evenly.

As you can see, corner cutting may be just a tiny action or omission. But it is frightening how serious the consequences can be.

The worst consequence of cutting corners is the pain and suffering it can cause to people around you.

By cutting corners, you could endanger the health and safety of your colleagues, your customers and yourself. How? Look at the examples on the previous page to see how easy it would be to cause an accident: someone could get an electric shock from an unreported – and therefore unrepaired – cable. Consider how quickly illness can occur: unrinsed pots could transfer germs to a customer's food and cause poisoning.

One tiny piece of corner cutting could end up being very painful in human terms.

- Consider how the examples of corner cutting on the previous page could create problems.

Firstly, think about risks to people – to others and to you. Remember that staff are sometimes disciplined or even dismissed for dangerous corner cutting. Organizations are sometimes closed down – and the staff lose their jobs – because of the pain and suffering the organization has caused or might cause.

Then, think about the ways in which the examples could increase running costs. You already have a good idea of how staff contribute to the workplace running costs.

Finally, consider how the examples could lead to unpleasant costs in human and financial terms. Remember that dissatisfied customers – perhaps the ones who have to "go without" because of poor portioning – may take their custom elsewhere.

There are corner cutting danger lists later on....

HELP FOR YOU

Throughout this book, you'll find examples of ways to cut running costs without causing painful costs in human terms. You will also find examples of risky corner-cutting. If you have any queries about the differences, please have a chat with your supervisor.

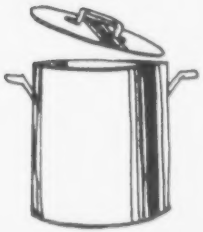
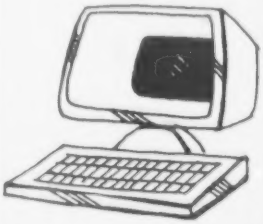
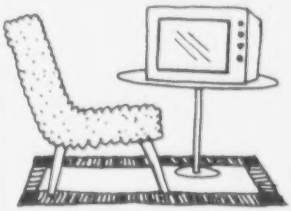
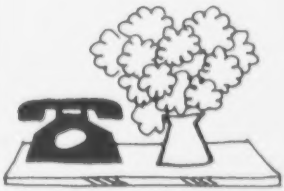
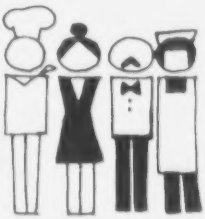
As you read through the book, watch out for the things that you and your colleagues could do in your work and for the things you should never do.

Remember that a book cannot cover everything. So, stay alert for things that you could do that are not mentioned. Bear in mind these general tips.

GENERAL TIPS

- **Follow all work rules covering costs and corner-cutting.**
- **Ask your supervisor whenever you are in any doubt about procedures. For instance: check before you throw away or replace any old, broken, damaged, used or "unwanted" items.**
- **Take all reasonable care not to break, damage or misuse any item or equipment.**
- **Take all reasonable steps not to waste energy (gas, electricity, oil, coal), food, cleaning materials, linen or supplies of any kind.**
- **Tell you supervisor if you spot wasteful or careless habits, or if you have any cost-saving ideas.**
- **Play your part in a staff team that is honest about the use of workplace property and facilities.**

Now search for specific tips. Not everything will be applicable but these symbols will help you to find your way around.

Kitchen 	Office 	Guest rooms and public areas 
Storage areas	Restaurant and bar	Reception and foyer 
	All staff 	

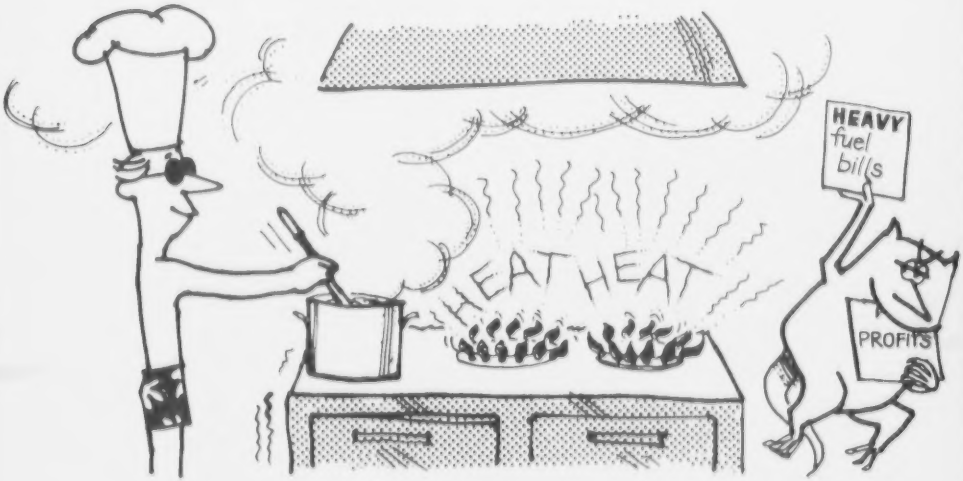
EATING UP ENERGY

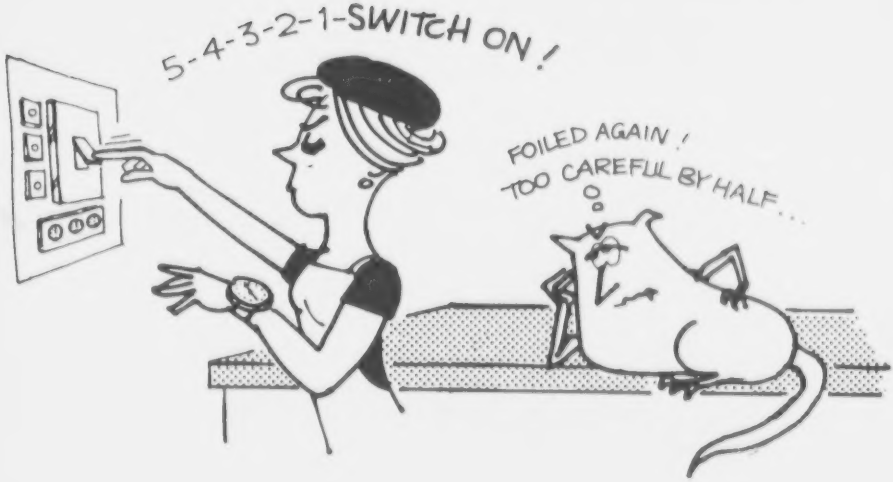
Are the kitchen gas and electricity switched on at the start of your day and left burning even when no one is using the equipment? Have you ever checked whether this is really necessary?

Did you know that preparing, cooking and presenting food accounts for about 40 per cent of your employer's total energy bill, with most of that energy "eaten up" by kitchen equipment?

- Unless it is the policy to leave kitchen equipment on, then TURN IT OFF when it is not needed.

Chilly kitchen when you start work? Then ask the chef to have a word with the boss. It may be possible to get a cheaper form of heating than the cooking equipment!





- If grills, ovens, hobs, hot cupboards, etc need to be pre-heated, then find out exactly how long it takes for them to reach the correct temperature. Switch on at the correct time – not hours in advance!

- Don't waste heat by leaving hobs and rings half-covered. Use the correct size pans. Consider whether pots can share a hob or ring. Avoid using equipment like ovens and bains-marie only half-full.

- Plan ahead so that you do not keep opening oven, fridge or freezer doors. This causes unwanted temperature changes inside.

- Ensure that all equipment is scrupulously clean on the inside and on the outside. Energy consumption increases when gas or electricity have to heat through dirt. Of course, there's also the risk of transferring dirt from equipment and utensils on to food and causing food poisoning!

QUALITY, PORTIONS AND WASTAGE

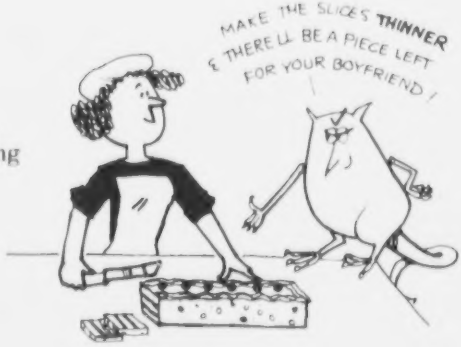
If you work in a catering kitchen, you are likely to carry out important tasks on meal portioning even if it is not your job to make the decisions.

A great deal of effort goes into planning the precise ingredients, quantities and portions of meals to keep within your employer's budget and to give customers a fair deal.

If you mess things up, you could leave customers feeling "cheated" so that they do not return. It could mean that food is left uneaten and has to be thrown away. What a waste of food and effort! If you mess things up, you might endanger the well-being of customers, particularly if you cook for the seriously ill, the very young, the elderly or people on special diets.

- Follow instructions on:
  - the right grade, quality or brand of food to use
  - trimming, draining, skimming and peeling foods
  - the exact proportions of ingredients
  - the precise portions per customer

- Never try to cut corners by using old or poor quality foods. The risk of food poisoning is too great.



- Don't let your colleagues try to cut their own food bills by taking food home (unless there is permission to do so).

- Don't let your work team cheat your employers or customers. It may cost you your job!

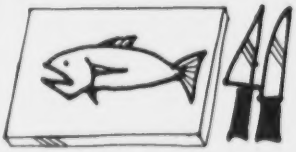
RIGHT FOR THE JOB

- Most things are designed for a specific job. It's wasteful and may be dangerous to use something for another purpose.

  Don't use tea towels or glass cloths for wiping up spills: it increases laundry bills and reduces the "life" of the linen.

  Don't use dishcloths as floor cloths or for wiping out ashtrays. It may seem to save a few seconds of your time, but it is dangerously unhygienic.

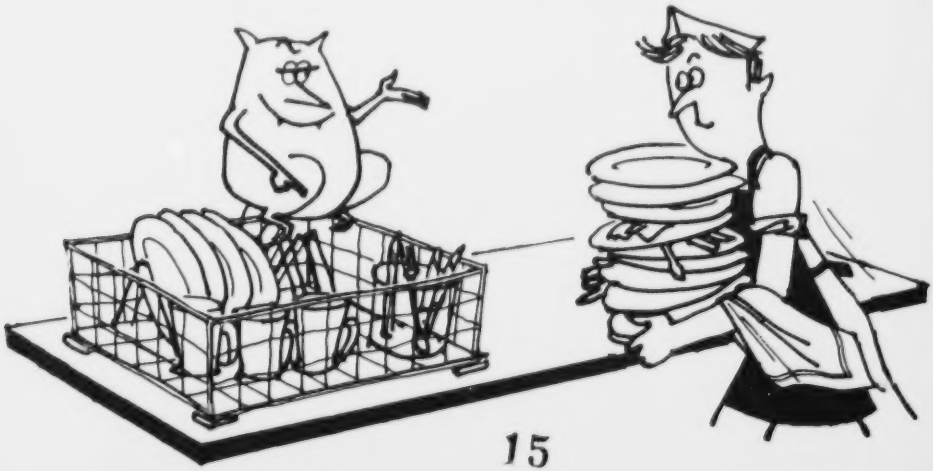
  Be strict about the hygienic use of chopping boards and knives. Get them scrupulously clean even though this may take a little time. Remember the risks of spreading germs between utensils and on to food where it may cause poisoning!



- Most tasks have a sensible procedure. It's often wasteful and may be dangerous to ignore it.

  You won't save time or money if you stack dishes or pots carelessly. Breakages cost a small fortune to replace.

  There's only one right way to stack a dishwasher, otherwise it will not wash properly and may increase the amount of energy used.

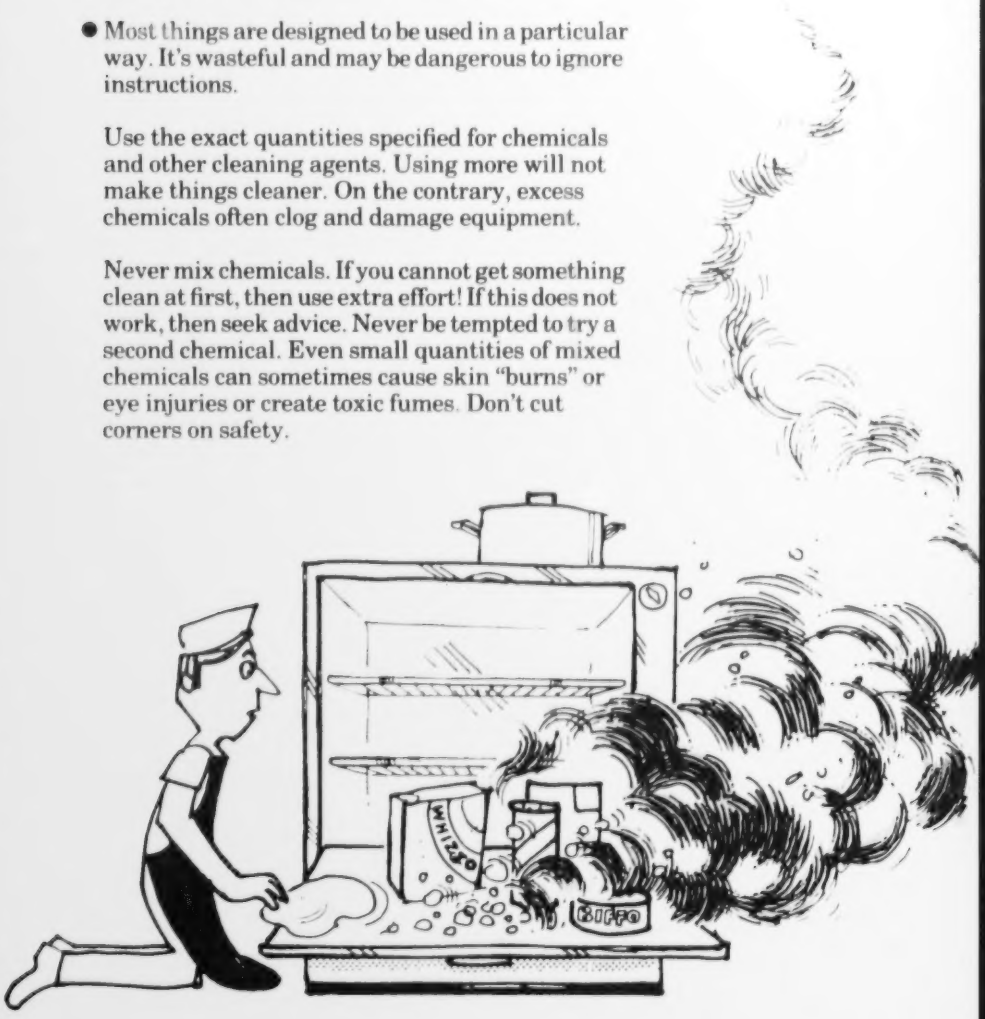


When washing at a sink, don't try to save a few pennies by reducing the temperature of the dish rinsing water. It needs to be very hot – at about 82 degrees C – to achieve sterilization.

- Most things are designed to be used in a particular way. It's wasteful and may be dangerous to ignore instructions.

  Use the exact quantities specified for chemicals and other cleaning agents. Using more will not make things cleaner. On the contrary, excess chemicals often clog and damage equipment.

  Never mix chemicals. If you cannot get something clean at first, then use extra effort! If this does not work, then seek advice. Never be tempted to try a second chemical. Even small quantities of mixed chemicals can sometimes cause skin "burns" or eye injuries or create toxic fumes. Don't cut corners on safety.



START
YOU GRAB A GUEST TOWEL TO CLEAN A STEAMY MIRROR— MISS ONE TURN
YOU RUN INTO THE KITCHEN, TRIP & SMASH A TRAY OF GLASSES
YOU PLAN FOR GOOD USE OF OVEN CAPACITY
YOU LEAVE THE HOTPLATE ON WHEN IT'S NOT NEEDED
YOU SWITCH OFF LIGHT ON LEAVING STOREROOM
YOU TAKE HOME THE 'ENDS' OF SOAP & TOILET PAPER FROM THE PUBLIC CLOAKROOM
YOU LEAVE A DIRTY GAS RING TILL 'NEXT TIME'
YOU HAVE A COST-CUTTING IDEA & TELL YOUR BOSS
YOU ALTER THE HEATING TIMER

NOT CORNERS!

YOU REPORT YOUR SUSPICIONS THAT A GUEST IS STEALING
YOU RING YOUR AUNT IN CANADA WITHOUT PERMISSION
FIRST PRIZE FOR EFFORT— YOU WIN!
FINISH
YOU 'BORROW' AN ENVELOPE FOR A LOVE-LETTER
YOU USE EXTRA CLEANSER TO SAVE TIME
YOU LEAVE A CELLAR DOOR OPEN
COLDROOM
SHUT
YOU REMOVE THE SCALE FORMATION IN THE KETTLE
YOU USE SEPARATE CHOPPING BOARDS & KNIVES FOR DIFFERENT FOODS
YOU ENSURE COLDROOM DOOR IS SHUT TIGHT

SERVING AND SAVING

You can never cut out effort if you work in a restaurant or bar but you can help control costs without damaging customer satisfaction or creating risks.

Rules vary, so check your instructions with your supervisor.

- Find out:
  - whether you should close all restaurant/bar doors to eliminate cold draughts
  - the best way to keep the temperature comfortable: warm without being stuffy in cold weather and cool without being draughty in warm weather
  - who has responsibility for altering the central heating, ventilation or air conditioning levels or the time controls
  - whether you should switch off restaurant/bar lights or heat when these areas are closed to guests.

- Ensure that you note all bookings accurately by repeating the details to guests. It will cost money, time and embarrassment if you get things wrong.

- Take care with breakable items like glasses and plates. They cost a fortune to replace – and the sound of breaking glass may worry customers and cause them to lose confidence in you.

- Watch out for danger areas when carrying plates and glasses.

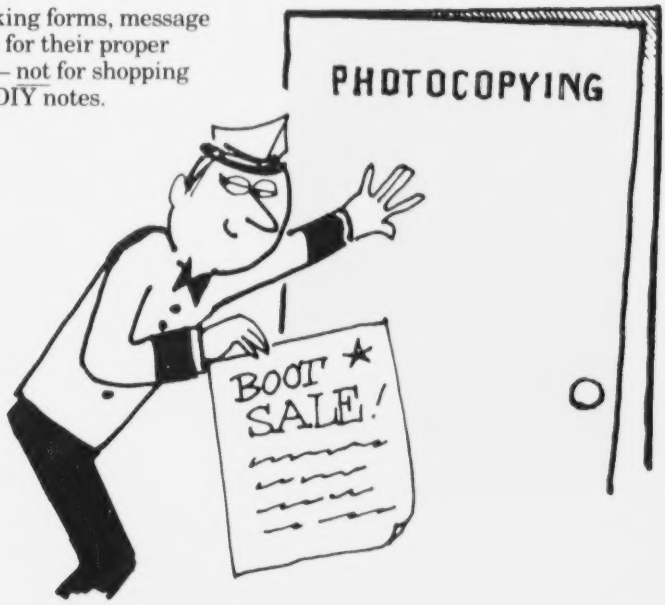
- Don't use table linen or glass cloths for wiping up spills or cleaning ashtrays. It is unhygienic, increases laundry bills and shortens the "life" of the linen.

- Watch out for guests who want to cut their home costs by collecting teaspoons, glasses, drinks mats, salt and pepper pots, ashtrays, etc. Find out the procedure for reporting your suspicions.

OUT OF SIGHT . . .

A lot of office work is invisible to guests. But it plays a highly visible part in the level of running costs.

- Business telephone calls are expensive, so prepare what you need to say before you dial. Be polite but brief. Avoid "hanging on".
- Try to make long calls at non-peak hours. The cheapest period is between 6 pm and 9 am. Calls made after 1 pm are cheaper than calls made between 9 am and 1 pm.
- Private calls made without permission are a form of theft and that goes for unauthorised use of photocopiers and stationery too!
- Find out whether equipment, like typewriters, can be switched off when not in use to save energy. Do check first because some items, like computers and telex machines, need to be left on even when they are "idle".
- Use booking forms, message pads, etc for their proper purpose – not for shopping lists, or DIY notes.



. . . OR IN VIEW

If you work at a reception desk or in a foyer, you can probably help cut costs in many of the ways that your behind-the-scenes colleagues can.

You can also help to stop some of the thefts and other kinds of dishonesty which cost catering organizations thousands of pounds each year.

- Ask your supervisor how you can remain alert for suspicious behaviour and what the procedure is for dealing with it.

- If you have to take bookings, ensure that you note them correctly by repeating the details to the customer. Remember that whenever you get things wrong it costs money to your employer, embarrassment to you and inconvenience to your customer.

EXPENSIVE GUESTS?

You cannot expect your customers to worry much about running costs or even human costs. So, it's up to you to keep an eye on things.

- Watch out for safety hazards such as trailing flexes or worn carpets, which could cause a trip, and obstructions or poor lighting where people need to walk.

  Report damage and breakages immediately so that things can be put right. It's true that "a stitch in time saves nine" by avoiding accidents and reducing long-term costs.

- Treat everything with great care. If you damage guest property, your employer will have to foot the bill. You'll probably create an upset and cause considerable inconvenience. Paying guests are unlikely to return!

- Remember that a few customers "take a fancy" to items such as towels. Report missing items promptly so that the next customer will not be inconvenienced and so that security staff can take action if necessary.

- Check what the policy is for servicing guest bedrooms and suites and for public areas like cloakrooms, toilets and lounges.

  Find out the rules for:

  – switching off heating, lighting, ventilation, air conditioning and televisions when guests are out or when your workplace is closed
  – opening and closing windows
  – replacing used towels, soaps, linen, etc
  – dealing with breakages and missing items.

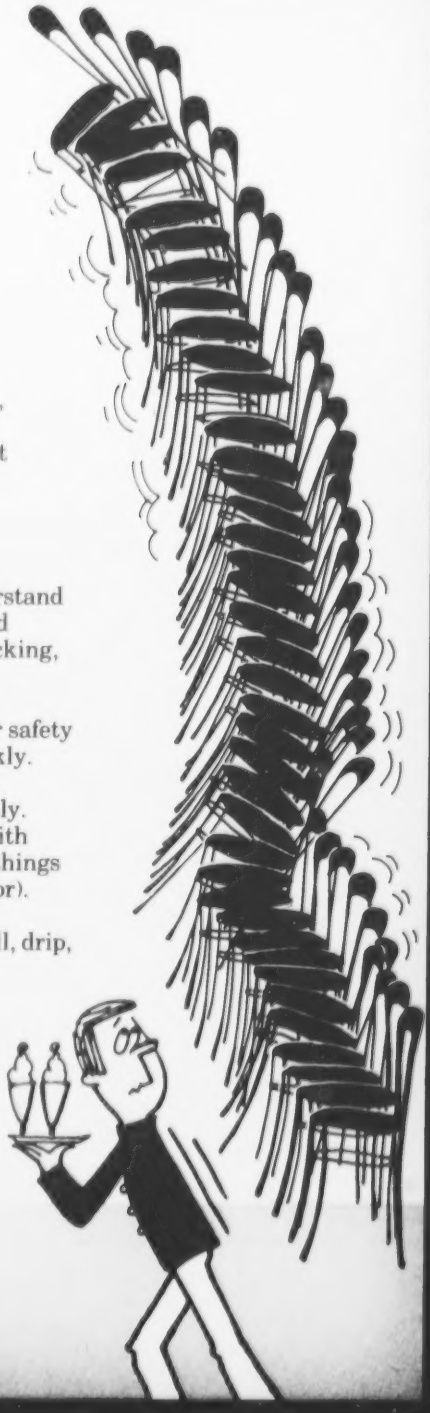
- Remember: use items correctly. Don't use towels and linen for mopping up spills or polishing mirrors.

- Don't try to save time by overloading electrical sockets. Use another socket or unplug other items first.

STORING UP PROBLEMS

Most staff have to use some kind of store, whether it is for food, drink, linen, crockery, cleaning materials, stationery, tools or whatever. These tips will help you to cut out unnecessary costs of damage, breakage, deterioration and wastage.

- Follow procedures. Ensure that you understand and observe rules covering permission and paperwork (such as stock receipts) for stacking, removing or transferring goods.
- Store items tidily in the correct place – for safety and so that everyone can find things quickly.
- Ensure that everything is labelled correctly. Otherwise you could cause an accident (with chemicals, for instance) or have to throw things away (such as food which is opened in error).
- Stack items correctly. Don't let things spill, drip, fall over or become crushed.



- Use items in the correct order. This usually involves "stock rotation". It means that the first items put into store should be the first to be taken out: first in, first out! Obviously this is important to keep food fresh and chemicals safe and to prolong the "life" of linen, crockery, etc.

  Check with your supervisor for any exceptions to "stock rotation", such as some wines, cheese and cakes which need to mature.

- Take out only what you need. Don't be wasteful. Check your rules for obtaining store items.

- Don't overfill freezers, cold rooms or fridges. It causes the temperature to increase so that extra energy is needed to cool things down again. It may also mean that foods start to deteriorate or even perish.

- Switch off lights when you leave store rooms, cellars, etc. Stored items do not need the light!

CUT COSTS . . .

As you can see, your own actions can reduce or increase running costs and create or eliminate painful costs in human terms.

When you go about your work each day, you are in the best position to spot better ways of doing things – ways that eliminate wastage and breakages and avoid putting customers and colleagues at risk.

- Have you an idea for a better way of doing things? Then tell your boss. Always report your plan: never be tempted to "go it alone" with an idea. After all, there may be a very good reason why you don't do things that way already – it could, for instance, be dangerous.

Remember that no one is asking you to "sneak" on colleagues. It is simply a matter of suggesting ways to improve the way things are done. Some of your ideas will be helpful while some may be unsuitable: but they're always worth a mention.

. . . DON'T CUT CORNERS

You know that you can never cut out effort in the hotel and catering industry, however tempting it may be at times to slow down or give up. But then you'd be letting yourself down – as well as your colleagues, customers and employer.

- Always report corner-cutting to your supervisor. You may be able to prevent costs in human terms.
- Never cut your own costs by cutting corners at work. It is unworthy of you.
- Remember that it is also dishonest and illegal to use or "borrow" items without permission. Occasionally, people seem to get away with such behaviour – and even stealing – for a short while. But dishonesty has also cost jobs, reputations and honest records, while some people have been unable to obtain a new job. What is dishonesty really worth?

Dangers from cutting corners

- Your own health and safety and that of your colleagues and customers.
- Customer satisfaction.
- The loss of your own reputation and that of your workplace.
- Fines, legal fees and compensation if someone is hurt or property is damaged.
- The loss of your own job and those of your colleagues.

THE WORST TEMPTATIONS

There are problems and temptations in all jobs. Consider the greatest risks in your job of increasing running costs or creating painful costs in human terms. This list may help.

YES	NO	
☐	☐	Daydreaming.
☐	☐	Bad time-keeping.
☐	☐	Inattention to instructions.
☐	☐	Failing to clean equipment properly.
☐	☐	Failure to return things to their correct place.
☐	☐	Chipping and clipping furniture, crockery, etc because you are rushing.
☐	☐	Adopting unauthorised ways of doing things because you think they are better.
☐	☐	Cutting corners by using the same cloth for cleaning work-surfaces and floors.

Discuss the risks with your supervisor. Then make your own list.

MY COST-CAUSING RISKS

RUNNING COSTS	HUMAN COSTS

Now consider the best ways in which you can cut costs in your job. Make a list.

MY BEST WAYS TO CUT COSTS, BUT NOT CORNERS

RUNNING COSTS	HUMAN COSTS

REMEMBER

Cut costs!

- Take care not to waste or damage any items or materials.
- Tell your supervisor about any cost-saving ideas.
- Report any suspicions about theft or dishonest behaviour.
- Live up to your job – be honest at all times.

Don't cut corners!

- Follow work rules.
- Never attempt to cut cash costs if it risks the comfort, safety or satisfaction of guests or the well-being of colleagues.
- Remember that your efficiency and honesty are part of your job – they benefit you, your colleagues, your customers and employers.

Hopefully this book has helped you. If you have any queries, please have a chat with your supervisor or boss.

This series is published by the Hotel and Catering Training Board. Each handbook has been designed to be easy to read and remember for all members of staff.

Colourful illustrations, often humorous, support the important messages of the text. The books are each 28 pages in length, printed on high quality paper, A5 size.

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